



# NEWS RELEASE

## AREA DENTAL PROFESSIONALS ADDRESS ACCESS TO CARE WITH FREE SERVICES FOR CHILDREN

*Low income children benefit from annual Give Kids A Smile! events*

**(Catawba County)** --- Dentists and other volunteers in **Catawba County** are teaming up with hundreds of their peers in North Carolina and throughout the nation for “Give Kids a Smile!” day. This event is part of the American Dental Association’s Give Kids A Smile Program, which is celebrating its 10th anniversary in 2012. Last year, more than 44,800 dental team members nationwide participated in Give Kids A Smile.

This program is held annually to offer educational materials, provide free dental services to local, qualifying children from underserved families, raise awareness of the epidemic of untreated dental disease occurring here and across the country and raise awareness of the need to build local public and private partnerships to increase access to oral health care to solve this crisis.

Nearly one in four children, aged two to 11 years old have untreated cavities in their baby teeth, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Many children enrolled in Medicaid receive no dental services throughout the year. More commonly, tooth decay greatly restricts children’s daily activities and results in the loss of many millions of hours of classroom time each year.

In Catawba County, dental professionals will open their doors throughout the month of February to treat children for free. All children participating have been pre-screened and selected based on not having a current dental home. In preparation to the Give Kids A Smile program, dental preventive education was provided to over 6000 children, and it is anticipated that over 300 children will receive free restorative or preventive dental health services. This notable local effort is being accomplished through the leadership of the North Carolina Dental Society (NCDS) and the North

Carolina State Dental Hygienist who serves Catawba County. In addition to the NCDS and NCOHS, the efforts of thousands of volunteers and a number of organizations are essential to make the event a success. These organizations include the North Carolina Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, SmartStart (North Carolina Partnership for Children), the UNC School of Dentistry, North Carolina Community Colleges, and the North Carolina Dental Assistants. GKAS would not be possible without the generous support of corporate sponsors Henry Schein Dental, DEXIS Digital X-Ray and Colgate-Palmolive.

Local dentists and their staffs from Catawba County that have volunteered include: Dr. Tom Carnaggio, Dr. George Clay, Dr. Ashley Collins, Dr. Michael Cordora, Dr. Lena Eldridge, Dr. David Gaddis, Dr. Bryan Graham, Dr. Coke Gunter, Dr. Delores Hammer, Dr. Darryl Hatchett, Dr. Mark Helton, Dr. Kristin Herring, Dr. Gary Jones, Dr. Kimberly Jones, Dr. Ron Key, Dr. William Litaker, Dr. Patrick Maddy, Dr. Joshua Millsaps, Dr. John McAllister, Dr. Ross Penland, Dr. Cliff Pernell, Dr. Jason Sain, Dr. Jerry Sowers Jr., and Dr. Richard Troutman.

The ADA recommends that every child see a dentist no later than his or her first birthday. Dental disease among kids from underserved families is epidemic. 80 percent of children's tooth decay is found in just 25 percent of children. Dental disease is preventable. Brushing, flossing, eating a balanced diet, regular dental visits and having access to fluoride and sealants are ways to prevent dental disease. Ultimately, the money spent on prevention saves a lot more money down the road in dental treatment.

"This event, which requires months in planning, has been enthusiastically embraced by our local dental community and school systems," said Cindy W. Sigmon, Public Health Dental Hygienist for the NC Oral Health Section serving Catawba County. "I anticipate that \$100,000 in free dental care will be awarded this year to children from Catawba County through this Give Kids A Smile program."

For more information on "Give Kids a Smile!" contact Cindy W Sigmon at 828-695-5868 or Dr. Kristin Herring at 828-267-6858 or visit [www.ncdental.org](http://www.ncdental.org) or [www.ada.org](http://www.ada.org).

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